

Dearly Departed

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Summary: In the midst of his grief, while delivering the body of Senator Amidala to Naboo for her funeral, Obi-Wan makes a wish and the Force grants it. (He should be more careful what he wishes for .) This is a post-ROTS AU Obidala.

1. Chapter 1

Title: Dearly Departed

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Rating: T

Genre: Dark Comedy/Drama

Author's Notes: **Was** listening to "Kiss from a Rose" by Seal and got the idea for this fic. Don't ask. I don't think the two are related whatsoever! :P

Disclaimer: **They're** not mine, they're not even George's any longer! I think belong to some huge corporation called Disney. I don't make money from this, and it's a good thing, because if I did, I don't think I'd have as much fun!

* * *

><p>Chapter OnePrologue</p>

He could hardly believe it, but how could he deny something he had seen with his own eyes?

Senator Amidala was dead. Padm , his beautiful Padm  was gone.

No. He couldn't say that. She didn't belong to him. She had belonged to another; one whose name he could no longer bear to say; not even in his own mind.

He lived still, this man he had considered a brother; at least before the betrayal. Obi-Wan could feel him in the Force still; a dark, shadowy existence beyond his reach. No longer, however, could he feel his emotions or track his whereabouts. Their training bond had been eliminated long ago, when his Apprentice had become a Knight; A Knight who had taken a path Obi-Wan had never wanted him to take.

He would've tried to stop him had he known about it in time. Hindsight did him very little good now. His Padawan was no longer under his influence; his destiny was out of Obi-Wan's hands. And as in all cases when a choice of evil is made over good, there is always collateral damage and the innocent are the ones who suffer.

In this particular case, it was Padmã©.

When he had followed her to Mustafar to confront his apprentice, it had never occurred to Obi-Wan that her life would be in danger. She was pregnant with the man's children, and he was supposed to love her! How could you do that type of harm to someone you supposedly loved?

Obi-Wan didn't understand it. Only a mind twisted by the Dark could do such a thing. He would never.

If she had been his.

If she had been his, her life would've been much different. He would've made sure she was happy, safe, and loved.

Not lying stone-cold in Bail Organa's ship.

Somewhere else on board the Sundered Heart were two infants who needed their mother, and she needed them. He refused to believe she would give up so easily, as the med droids had reported. She wouldn't have done that. There had to be something else! Something had to have happened to her. Perhaps her husband's attempt at choking the life out of her had done it. Or perhaps there were undiagnosed complications during delivery.

She hadn't just given up. She couldn't have. He had seen her face, saw the way she looked at her children, at him. She had hope. He refused to believe otherwise.

He should've done something. But it was too late.

"Padmã©," Obi-Wan spoke to the lifeless body which lay before him. "I'm sorry I didn't help you sooner. I'm sorry I didn't see what he was capable of. I wish I could've. If I had known, I could've warned you. Would you have listened to me?"

Obi-Wan leaned his head onto the side of her deathbed, his faced pressed into the white sheet which covered her body. He couldn't see her, and he was glad. The sight of her lying there silent and still would only add to his grief and guilt. He chose to remember her as she was. Long before him; When she was brave, strong, and so full of

life.

"That day when we met again in your apartment," he continued speaking softly into the silence of the ship's med galley, "and you took my hand, I should've held onto it and not let you go. I was a fool. I didn't see what was right in front of me and now I've lost you forever. I would give anything to have one more chance, PadmÃ©. Anythingâ€|"

The strength of his voice had faded as Obi-Wan gave in to the exhaustion which was relentlessly pursuing him. He fell asleep on his knees, leaning against the bed, unaware of the bright light which filled the small space. The illumination lasted but a moment, and shone down upon the two bodies in the room, one of which was no longer dead.

At first, he thought he was dreaming. He used to dream of PadmÃ© when he was troubled, and it was no surprise those dreams were recurring. In them, she would often card her fingers through his hair and say his name.

But something told Obi-Wan this was no dream, and he forced himself to awareness, only to discover that indeed, there were fingers upon his scalp, and a voice sounding just like PadmÃ©'s was calling to him.

It had finally happened. All those years of refusing to see the Healers were coming back to haunt him. He had gone insane.

The next time the hand touched his scalp, he grabbed it and came off the floor, dropping it as if it were molten steel when he discovered what it was attached to. Not what exactly, but who.

Her eyes were a bit more sunken than normal, and she looked a little pale, but that was to be expected considering she was dead.

"Obi-Wan," she said again. It was definitely her voice. "What are you gawking at?"

"Youâ€|" he mumbled incoherently, backing up a step or two until he hit the wall. "You died."

"What? Don't be ridiculous," a very much alive PadmÃ© told him as she swung her legs over the edge of the bed. "And why am I in this silly med gown? What happened? Where are we?"

He thought he knew. But now, he wasn't so sure.

"You died," Obi-Wan repeated flatly.

"Stop saying that," she demanded. "I'm obviously not dead."

He couldn't believe he was about to say this, but: "Are you sure?"

"Obi-Wan."

He really wished she would stop speaking his name like that. It was usually quite enjoyable to hear, although not at the present

moment.

"Come here."

"No," he told her, unsure of what he was witnessing. If this were a dream, then he was the one in control and he needed to wake up. If he were mad, then there was no telling what he was capable of. It would be best if he just stayed where he was.

"Fine," she said, hopping off the mattress. "Then I'll come to you."

He was frozen solid: A chunk of ice floating in the deepest, coldest reaches of space.

But then her hand landed on his chest, and it was warm, and it was solid, and it was real.

"See? I'm fine and I'm here."

He wasn't so sure about that, and decided this situation required a second opinion. Just in case.

"Stay put," he told her. "Master Yoda needs to see this. You," he corrected himself quickly. "He needs to see you."

"All right," PadmÃ© replied, confusion knitting her brow as Obi-Wan slid himself sideways down the wall toward the door. "And perhaps, you can ask him where my clothes are?"

* * *

><p>AN: **I know, I know. I said I was leaving town for a few days, and I am, but I COULD NOT resist starting this story! I am weak that way. :P I'll pick up where I left off as soon as I get back!

2. Chapter 2

***Dearly Departed" : Chapter Two**

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><p>"I don't understand. Droid malfunction? I've never heard of such a thing. The GH-7 is usually quite reliable. They declared her death. How is this possible?"<p>

Senator Bail Organa was even more beside himself than Obi-Wan had been. The trouble was, Obi-Wan didn't have any answers. He was hoping Yoda would figure things out. The old Master had hobbled off to investigate the situation for himself, but he had yet returned, and that was nearly half an hour ago. In the meantime, Bail was continuing to spout unanswerable questions.

"I mean, don't get me wrong," the Senator continued, sitting quite still at the conference table on board his luxurious yacht while Obi-Wan was a jittery bundle of tightly-bound nerves. "I think it's great. The children will have a mother after all, but this leads to an entirely new set of issues. We need to contact Naboo and cancel

her funeral proceedings, don't we? And where is she to go? Her husband will still be after her, won't he? And now the children as well. Do we keep them together or separate them after all?"

Obi-Wan wasn't sure what to do in this particular case. He'd never dealt with a possible resurrection before.

"I'm afraid I don't have the answers," he replied, relieved when Yoda returned. The ancient Jedi walked slowly and casually to the opposite end of the long table and elevated himself onto a seat. He then stared pensively at the pair who were staring expectantly back at him.

"Well?" Obi-Wan prompted, losing his patience. "Did you see her? Did you speak to her? What's your diagnosis?"

It was another few seconds before Master Yoda answered, his eyes widened with curiosity. "Dead, she no longer is."

There was a phrase his padawan used to use in situations like this â€" whenever Obi-Wan had stated the obvious. He wouldn't repeat it here however, since it bordered on being disrespectful. "I presumed that myself, Master," Obi-Wan told him instead. "But what does that mean?"

"We need to contact Naboo and her family to give them the good news." Senator Organa announced, rising from his seat to most likely do that very thing, but was stopped by an uplifted claw.

"Wait, we must. Though dead she no longer is, alive she also is not."

"Pardon?" Obi-Wan leaned forward to tune his hearing. Sometimes his mentor's verbal syntax made him difficult to understand, and this sounded important.

"Spoken with her I have. Senator Amidala, she is, although her life force here I did not sense. Something holding her here, it is."

"Like, she's in limbo? My wife will be intrigued. Breha studies this sort of thing." Bail explained although Obi-Wan could care less and he cast the man a dubious glare before turning his attention back to the one who apparently knew all the answers.

"What you're saying is, that even though her body is here, her spirit is elsewhere? Why? And for how long?"

Master Yoda's eyes squeezed shut tightly as he apparently accessed the Force for information. "Unsure, I am. Perhaps, something to do here she has."

"Oh, I've read about this," Bail interrupted again. "Or my wife has. Sometimes ghosts cling to this realm to complete something they've left undone, or to do something they meant to."

For once the man's ramblings actually made some sense, but they frightened Obi-Wan all the same. Panic began to grip him as he recalled that careless plea he had cast out to the Force earlier. Was it possible that he was responsible for holding PadmÃ's spirit here?

What had he said? Something about wanting to express his true feelings, wasn't it? To spend more time with her?

"Perhaps," Yoda was saying while Obi-Wan was trying his best to remember exactly what he'd said. "Her time here, uncertain it may be. Her heart, it beats not. Her lungs, they breathe not. Soon, her body, begin the natural processes, it will."

"Natural processes?" Obi-Wan uttered, now becoming quite mortified. "You mean, decay? She's going to start decaying?"

"How interesting," he thought he heard Bail say.

Obi-Wan had studied anatomy as a padawan, from Antarian to Zanthian. Regardless of the life form, the decomposition process was the same. Exposed to heat, oxygen, and humidity, it was only a matter of days before the cycle began. At the most, he had five. If that. Mostly likely, three.

"Without the spirit, the body will degenerate," Yoda continued. "Your duty, Master Kenobi, to discover why she is here, it is."

He couldn't argue, since she was most likely here because of him.

"Though, difficult it will be."

No kidding. How was he ever going to explain this to her?

"For, remember nothing, she does."

Wait. More important details. Obi-Wan gave Yoda his undivided attention. "Say that again?"

"Nothing in the past, does she recall. Ask her many questions, I did. You protecting her, the last thing she remembers, it is."

"You mean, when Anaâ€¦when we investigated the attempt on her life? But that was over five years ago!"

"Remarkable," Bail pointed out. "She has no recollection of the fall of the Republic, the attack on the Temple, or even giving birth?"

"No." Yoda answered simply. "Hiding from the assassin, she thinks she is. Up to you, Master Kenobi, will it be to inform her of the truth. Though, use your best judgment you should. Unstable, she is. Tenuous, her hold on this realm. For in this place, she should not be."

What had seemed so simple before, now had become quite complicated. Although it had grieved him greatly to watch her go, Obi-Wan had learned long ago that sometimes, things happen for a reason. He had hoped her death would serve some higher purpose. Something the Force would explain to him at a later time. It made her absence bearable.

But now, he had to watch her disintegrate before his very eyes? All while trying to explain to her what had happened over the past five years? In light of everything that had happened recently, it was just too much!

What in all the stars had he done?

3. Chapter 3

****Dearly Departed: Chapter Three****

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><p>It was rather ironic. He had asked for more time. He had wished for her to be alive and yet he hesitated outside the rec galley where he had left her.<p>

"I thought that was you," her voice announced as the door suddenly slid open. "What are you standing about for? We have some preparations to make. If you think I'm going to spend all my time running and hiding, you've got another thing coming."

"But I need to tell you.." Obi-Wan began and then stopped. She was energetic and full of purpose; just as he remembered her, before the world they had known and loved toppled and fell. He wasn't sure why she was here. It may have been something he'd said, or something she needed to do. In either case, why would she need to know everything? Her time was short. Extremely short. He might as well let her enjoy it.

"What is it you were saying?" PadmÃ© asked him before reaching up and placing the back of her hand on his forehead. "Obi-Wan? Are you feeling all right? You seem to be drifting."

"I'm fine," he confirmed, removing her hand with his own, surprised to find it warm when there was no reason for it to be. Perhaps her blood had not congealed yet. He shuddered at the thought.

"No, you're not. You're shaking. Here. Come inside and sit while we talk."

He allowed her to draw him inside the galley and seat himself next to her on a bench that was against the wall. "Where are we headed? Naboo? I know some very isolated places. The Lake Country is extremely remoteâ€¦"

Yes, he was aware that was where his apprentice had hidden her before, but a lot had changed and a few years had passed. He was older and wiser than he once was.

"No, we're not going to Naboo. If I were an assassin, your home planet is the first place I would look."

"But out in the Lake Country there are.." she continued to argue, though Obi-Wan would have no part in it. In this instance, he was going to put his foot down. They couldn't go traipsing around Theed! What if someone saw them? What if she were recognized? She was supposed to be dead!

"Your family's vacation home?" he interrupted. "Good thinking. They'd never even consider looking for you there."

Okay. He hadn't meant to sound so snarky, but his nerves were raw. He

really needed to meditate. He took a chance and glanced at her, expecting to find a frown or her mouth gaped with shock, only to be surprised to find she didn't seem offended. In fact, she looked quiteâ€¦peaceful.

"Then, where do you suggest?" she asked.

As far away as possible? Someplace in the Outer Rim maybe. It wasn't his decision, really. He was supposed to be looking after her, making this time enjoyable for her. He would let her decide â€" as long as it wasn't Naboo.

"You decide," he told her.

"I tried that already," she bit back. Well then. Maybe she wasn't so at peace after all.

Someone was at the door. It turned out to be Senator Organa and he poked his head in once PadmÃ© had told him to enter.

"I've contacted Breha, and told her of ourâ€¦situation."

Obi-Wan couldn't stop his brows from making a hasty retreat up into his scalp. Why not just announce it across the Holonet News? 'Galactic Senator Rises from the Dead! Tune into tonight's main broadcast for more details!'

"With Master Yoda's consent, of course," Bail hurriedly explained, apparently noticing Obi-Wan's alarm. "And she told me she would be more than happy to have some guests stay at the palace. In one of the more private suites, of course."

"Alderaan would be perfectly fine," PadmÃ© announced with a smile. "Is that all right with you, Master Jedi? Secure enough? Or do you have a better idea?"

Taking care of a corpse inside one of the most luxurious palaces in the galaxy? One which most likely has an enormous staff? What a perfect plan!

"That would be fine," Obi-Wan grinned, hiding his growing anxiety.

"Then, Alderaan, it is. Tell Breha I'm looking forward to seeing her again. It's been a long while." She told Bail.

'Longer than you realize,' Obi-Wan said to himself.

Bail had left them alone once again and Obi-Wan found himself nervously anticipating conversation with her. He had never been this nervous around PadmÃ© before, but this was different. And it wasn't because she was dead. It was because she didn't realize so much had happened. He had so much to hide!

"I hope this matter is resolved soon. These are dangerous times and I'm needed at the Senate. The Separatists don't yet have an army, but if the Military Creation Act passes, I am sure the Republic will be forced to go to war. I just can't let that happen. I'll need to return to Coruscant as soon asâ€¦"

Obi-Wan sat statue still and pretended to listen as she went on and on, although he was actually arguing with himself. Should he tell her? Or should he keep her in the dark?

As far as PadmÃ© knew, the Clone Wars hadn't even happened, but the threat of war was foremost on her mind. All she seemed concerned with at the moment was the military act, which passed, by the way. He definitely wouldn't want to inform her about that.

At least, he thought with relief, she hadn't asked him about Anakin.

"So, tell me," she smiled at him sweetly, apparently finished with her political discourse. "How's Annie? And where is he, by the way?"

Obi-Wan sighed heavily. When was he ever going to learn?

4. Chapter 4

****Dearly Departed: Chapter Four****

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><p>The moment they had arrived at the home of Senator Organa, his wife, Breha had become firmly attached to PadmÃ©. Bail hadn't exaggerated. The woman seemed fascinated with the situation.<p>

"I've arranged for a suite to be prepared on the first level, because, wellâ€|" the woman paused, apparently unsure of how to explain her reasoning. "We don't want you having to go up and down all those stairs all the time, do we?"

"I could've managed," PadmÃ© tried to convince her as she lifted a bag Master Yoda had placed her meager belongings in.

The med gown had been left on board, and in its place, she was wearing the travel outfit she'd had on when she unknowingly delivered Obi-Wan to Mustafar; An outfit which had led to a whole new series of questions and lies.

"_Why are my clothes the wrong size? I don't remember even owning this outfit. Are you sure it's mine? Have I lost weight? This top is literally three sizes too big!" _

He had explained they had been in a rush to leave and he had offered to pack for her. Apparently, he had grabbed the wrong things.

"_Why were we in such a hurry? Was I injured? I don't even remember."
_

The assassin had broken into her home and he'd found her knocked out cold, Obi-Wan explained. He had carried her to the ship himself and grabbed only a few necessities. The med droids had cared for her on board Bail's yacht, he told her, which explained the med gown: An explanation with glimpses of the truth concealed within, and one which seemed to satisfy her for the time-being.

The two women were walking arm in arm through the obviously deserted palace, which eased some of his worry. During his various missions, Obi-Wan had become rather familiar with palace staff and their tendencies to spread gossip. Breha, apparently had the same understanding, and he relaxed a little knowing she was protecting their privacy.

After passing through the main areas, they walked through a hidden door in Bail's library and entered a narrow hall which gradually opened into a roomy private bed and bath.

Obi-Wan was appreciative of the size of the space, although the first thing he noticed was the protective coverings. Inside the room, every single piece of furniture was wrapped with what appeared to be clear plastic. The Queen obviously wasn't taking any chances.

"You two get comfortable. I'll return in a moment with a change of clothes for you both, as well as some refreshments," Breha announced from the doorway, smiling to disguise her own worry before leaving.

Obi-Wan hadn't considered what he was wearing himself. He'd been too concerned with PadmÃ© to notice, and thankfully, she hadn't either. There were scorch marks and burned places all over his uniform from the lava on Mustafar where he had battled his apprentice. Now that he realized it, he would be happy to change; one less thing to spark a memory he would prefer to forget.

But then there was the other thing: PadmÃ©. He couldn't look at her without feeling regret for what had happened to her, as well as what was happening now. Somewhere in this palace were her children. Until the situation had resolved, everyone had agreed that Breha and a few trustworthy staff members would care for them. Master Yoda would stay as long as he could, to conceal their auras within the Force in order to protect them from their father.

After PadmÃ©â€¦Obi-Wan paused in his thinking, uncomfortable with the realities of her future. Afterwards, he edited himself, afterwards, the children would have to be separated; for their own safety. In the meantime, his duty was to protect and care for their mother.

"That's strange," he heard her utter from the other side of room, while he stared out the windows toward the distant mountains.

"What is it?"

She held up her hand toward him, palm down, her gaze transfixed upon her fingers. Obi-Wan stepped forward to ascertain the problem, surprised and disturbed upon his discovery.

So, it had begun.

On her right hand, she was missing a fingernail. And not just the tip, but the entire thing was completely gone. And there was no trace of blood.

"I must've knocked it off when I was carrying in my bag," she wondered aloud, continuing to stare at her hand. "How could I do that without knowing it? It doesn't even hurt."

Obi-Wan's grin was shaky at best, but there was only one thing he could do. He bent over and began a thorough search of the lush carpeting in the room; from the doorway toward the bed, where she had walked. If he had to, he would retrace their steps all the way out to the landing platform.

"What are you doing?" she asked him, her tone sounding a bit incredulous.

"Looking for your nail," he answered truthfully.

He heard her huff with disbelief, although she didn't argue, and soon joined him.

Obi-Wan glanced to her hand for reference and then back to the floor. He had noticed in the past that PadmÃ© had good taste. True, sometimes her gowns and hairstyles were rather elaborate, but that went along with her political standing, and was expected. Everything else, however, was always understated; from the cosmetics on her face to nails on her hands. Both were always clean and natural. He had seen plenty of women all over the galaxy who were the opposite, but he appreciated PadmÃ©'s choices, which allowed her true beauty to show through.

The nail they were looking for was natural, the color of her pale skin, and was difficult to locate on the light-colored floor, but he finally did. It was lying deep in the pile, close to the bedframe. After picking it up, Obi-Wan studied it carefully to make sure there were no cracks or splits.

PadmÃ© was watching him with a curious expression. "Now, what are you going to do with it?" she asked him, her lip quirking upward.

There was only one thing he could do.

Obi-Wan trotted back down the hall and through the library, catching sight of the Queen near the foyer, where she was speaking with her husband. Bail saw him first and alerted his wife.

"What is it Master Kenobi? Is everything all right?" the woman said with some alarm, after which Obi-Wan produced the nail lying on his outstretched palm.

"Would you happen to have any epoxy, by chance?"

5. Chapter 5

****Dearly Departed: Chapter Five****

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><p>Without blood coursing through it, the skin of her hand was beginning to develop a greenish tint, which Obi-Wan opted to ignore. He kept his focus on the nail bed and did his best to apply just the right amount of epoxy. As he worked, he was very much aware of the fact PadmÃ© was staring at him rather intently.<p>

The task was almost complete when she finally shared what was on her mind.

"You cut your hair," she pointed out as he if he already didn't know. "It was rather long just a few days ago, wasn't it?"

He was actually doing his best to limit his lies to a certain number a day, and imagined he'd already met his quota, so he grinned in response without saying a word.

"I just now noticed it, but I like it. Much better than before."

Should he thank her? Actually, as soon as his apprentice had been knighted, he'd had his hair cut shorter. It wasn't until then that he actually had some time for himself.

He offered her another grin. "I think that does it," he told her, lifting her hand to view his accomplishment.

"What happens when the nail begins to grow back?" she asked him, which was reasonable.

"Then we'll remove it. Shouldn't be too difficult," he answered her, knowing full well, that wasn't going to happen.

His reply seemed to make sense to her, but she continued to stare at him until the intensity of her gaze forced him to look away. "I wonder what's keeping the Queen? I'm starting to get hungry."

"I'm not, actually." PadmÃ© rose from the padded and plastic-covered settee and admired her repaired digit. "I'm going to freshen up."

"All right. I'll check on Breha and see what's keeping her."

Obi-Wan rose and placed the epoxy on the nightstand to do just that when he heard a fairly loud shriek come from the bathing room. It wasn't exactly a scream; more like a high-pitched squeal. It hadn't lasted very long, but it drove him to the room immediately.

He burst through the dual doors without announcing himself, attuned to the Force to be fully aware of any possibility of a disturbance. He found none, although PadmÃ© herself looked a little concerned. Her hand was clamped over her mouth, as her widened eyes viewed her reflection. She was obviously stunned with what she was seeing.

"Whatâ€¦what's happening to me!" she breathed out in broken syllables. "I look awful!"

"No you don't," Obi-Wan assured her. "And as soon as the Queen arrives, you'll have some fresh clothes to wear. Some which actually fit." He smiled into the mirror, although his ill-timed attempt at humor did very little to lessen her shock.

Thankfully, at that moment, there was a knock on the bedroom door. Obi-Wan left the bathing room to answer it, hoping it was the Queen delivering the goods she had promised earlier.

When he opened the door, Obi-Wan was pleased to find out that indeed it was Queen Organa standing in the hall, and she did appear to be

carrying food, as well as two sets of clothing which were flung over her arm.

Obi-Wan took the tray of food from her and set it on a table just inside the door. She handed him the clothing next, which he laid across the bed.

Thinking that was all, he was surprised to see her still standing in the doorway, with a rather strange grin upon her face. It was similar to the one she had shown PadmÃ© earlier. It was one of nervous anticipation, and it immediately put Obi-Wan on his guard.

Especially when he heard a strange chortling sound coming from behind the Queen; a noise which caused her smile to disappear instantly. Only then, did Obi-Wan notice the rope she held in her other hand.

"Now, before you make any narrow-minded judgments," she began explaining. "Hear me out. I have been a student of the supernatural most of my life. I have studied the passage of souls, the possibilities of reincarnation and the afterlife. What I'm about to suggest is a ritual passed down through generations, and I think it's worth a try."

Following a slight tug on the rope, a wooly, spotted beast stepped out from behind the Queen's massive gown. It was short, with four legs and an equal amount of horns protruding from its skull, although it seemed quite tame.

"I had to pay a hefty price to a farmer nearby to acquire this animal, since it was their best, but in this case, only the best will do," she continued, her words not yet sinking into his fogged brain.

Was he hearing her correctly? He stay silent as she continued, wanting to give her the opportunity to explain herself before he made any decisions; as she had requested.

"It's a simple ceremony, actually. And can be done at any time of day. No need for a full moon or anything like that. We just need the presence of the trapped spirit, a Force-sensitive witness, and the blood of a virgin, cloven-hoofed beast."

That's what he was afraid she was going to say. It seemed the plastic-wrapped room had a dual purpose after all.

"A few words of the ancient ritual, a quick and clean sacrifice, the victim lying within a circle of its blood, and Senator Amidala's spirit will be free. Simple as that."

He'd always thought Breha Organa was a sensible woman; well educated and considerate. Now, he wasn't so sure. And yet, he had allowed her to speak her mind. In fact, he hadn't said a word up until the point she produced a long, zig-zag vibroblade from her gown; one which was inscribed with patterns and symbols he did not recognize.

"No," he announced quite adamantly while reaching for the door.

"So, you're just going to allow her to suffer? You need to let her

go, Master Kenobi!"

"No," Obi-Wan repeated, attempting to slide the door shut, although the process was interrupted by the Queen's hand.

"You are not a selfish man," she told him through the narrow opening. "Do not allow your personal feelings to interfere in the natural course of her passing."

Obi-Wan continued to stare at the delirious woman. Her ideas may be bordering on insanity, but she was insightful. Perhaps, too insightful.

"Thank you for the food and the clothing. Have a pleasant evening," he told her before physically removing her hand and closing the door.

6. Chapter 6

****Dearly Departed: Chapter Six****

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><p>There were all sorts of commotion coming from the bath after Obi-Wan had closed the door on the Queen. So much, that he was forced to check on PadmÃ© again. Apparently, she was looking for something. Every cabinet door was open, every drawer, and a variety of items were haphazardly laid all over the floor. She was still hunting, though, so she hadn't found what she was searching for yet.<p>

"May I be of some assistance?" he offered from the doorway.

"There has to be something here! It's a guest room, isn't it?" PadmÃ© murmured more to herself than to him, as she continued to claw her way through the bathing supplies.

"Perhaps if you'd tell me what you're looking for, I could help," Obi-Wan announced, stepping into the room.

When she spun on him, her eyes were frantic, her face creased with worry. "Cosmetics. There has to be something in here!"

"Cosmetics?" Obi-Wan repeated with a smirk.

"Yeah, you know. The stuff women wear to improve their looks?" she replied rather sarcastically, once more taking up her quest.

She was obviously irritated and concerned. She had a right to be, and he could only imagine how she would react if she knew the truth. He was here to ease her worry though, wasn't he? To make her passage into the next realm as pleasant as possible?

"PadmÃ©," he said to her as soothingly as he could manage, accompanied by a gentle touch to her arm. "You don't need any of those things. You are beautiful just the way you are."

Her face was beyond incredulous when she lifted her head toward him, and a long raspberry escaped her pursed lips. "You can't be serious."

Obi-Wan schooled his features and reached down for her. "I am being absolutely sincere," he vowed, lifting her to her feet. "You are the most beautiful woman I have ever known."

There. An actual truth. Perhaps it would make up for all of the untruths he'd been sharing lately, and it just may keep her from bringing up this subject again during her final days.

While he waited, her gaze gradually went from alarmed to curious, and then something he hoped was trust. She visibly relaxed before his eyes and one corner of her mouth actually lifted with a smile. It was small, but he'd take it.

"Come. The Queen brought you a change of clothing."

On the bed was a velvet gown in dark blue. It was fairly simple; not quite as extravagant as she was probably used to, but Obi-Wan thought it was lovely and that Padm  would look lovely in it.

"I'll step outside for a moment to give you some privacy if you'd like to change. Let me know if you need any help." He smiled genuinely and did as he'd said, thinking it would be just a few moments, when it ended up being a lot more.

Finally, the door cracked open and she stuck her face through it. "Obi-Wan? I'm afraid I need some help. Would you mind?"

"Of course not," he answered, opening the door and stepping back into the bedroom. Closing it behind him, he awaited her request and watched as Padm  spun around. Down the back of the gown were numerous small buttons with tiny loops to attach them to. Between the gap, Obi-Wan could see the skin of her back which was stretched tightly across her bones. He was shocked to see how emaciated she had become in such a short time.

"I don't know why, but I just can't reach them," she explained pulling her long hair to the side.

"You need to rest," he told her as he fumbled with the tiny buttons, silently cursing the clumsiness of his fingers.

"I'm not sleepy," she argued.

"It may do you some good," he tried to convince her. Not that he wanted her to sleep away their time together, but he was famished! He didn't want to eat in front of her and cause her any more concern. "I can help you with that as well."

"You mean, you're going to literally force me to go to sleep?"

Obi-Wan managed the final button and stepped back to make sure he hadn't missed any. "I'm not forcing you to do anything. It's your choice."

She turned around and Obi-Wan was pleased to discover the color of the gown took away some of the pallor of her skin. "All right, if you insist," she agreed with a sigh. "But just for a while. It's too early to sleep, and I don't want to be awake half the

night."

"Understood," he told her as he accompanied her to the bed, where she lay flat on her back, her ribcage and hip bones noticeably protruding. He was just about to summon the Force and apply his hand to her temple when she stopped him.

"Wait. My head is itching. Would you do me a favor first?"

"Of course," he told her, withdrawing his hand.

"I found a hairbrush in the bathroom. Would you mind brushing my hair out? I think that will help me relax."

Obi-Wan grinned. She asked for so very little and seemed hesitant in doing so. Didn't she understand he would do anything she asked? "I'd be happy to," he told her, rising from the bed to retrieve the item.

He returned to find PadmÃ© sitting upright with her back to the edge, her hair so long that it nearly reached the mattress.

He started at her scalp and ran the brush the entire length, catching a few loose strands here and there while PadmÃ© hummed with appreciation.

"Thank you so much for doing this. Perhaps when I start to feel better, we can begin to discuss hunting down this assassin. I know you agree that hiding out is the last thing we should be doing. What we should be doing is looking for clues and trying to track down whoever is responsible for killing CordÃ©! I'm honestly surprised you haven't started that yourself. I've never known you to stand back and do nothing while there are criminals freely roaming aboutâ€¦."

Obi-Wan worked the brush through her long tresses while she spoke, keeping silent. She had a lot to say on the subject, and he wasn't surprised. She too was one who never hesitated in getting involved. She'd never been afraid to step forward and risk her life to save others. He would call her reckless, if he didn't know that her intuition was quite keen.

"My gut tells me that perhaps Count Dooku is behind this," she mentioned just as the brush snagged in a knot in her hair.

More keen than anyone had imagined, Obi-Wan thought as he tried to untangle her hair. He recalled Master Yoda bringing up her suspicion all those years ago. The Jedi Council should've listened to her. Perhaps things wouldn't have turned out the way they did if they had.

Obi-Wan gave the brush a quick jerk and gasped when he observed the result.

Stuck in the brush was more than just a few stray hairs. An entire clump of her dark locks had been removed, leaving behind a bare strip of her scalp!

"Perhaps you're correct," Obi-Wan told her, desperately thinking of what he could do. "What led you to this decision?"

While she recited her theory, Obi-Wan glanced about the room, spying the bottle of epoxy on the nightstand. He called it to his hand quickly using the Force and liberally applied it to the wad of hair in his hand. Pretending to massage her scalp, he pressed the glued portion back into place.

"That's nice," she purred. "Thank you."

"My pleasure," Obi-Wan squeaked, pulling his hand away, horrified to see a number of her hairs were stuck to his fingers. He immediately hid the evidence behind his back while he tucked her into bed.

"Just a short nap, all right?"

"As you wish," he agreed, applying his other hand to her temple and sending her to sleep with a strong Force suggestion.

He had planned on using this time to fill his empty belly, but first, he had to clean his hand. He hated it whenever he found a hair in his food.

7. Chapter 7

****Dearly Departed: Chapter Seven****

* * *

><p>She had been under for at least half an hour and he had already eaten, but Obi-Wan hesitated at the bedside. He had told her he would wake her up soon, but he'd had a change of heart. To continue on in this manner was almost ridiculous, but he wasn't about to sacrifice an innocent animal to put an end to it, even if the Queen's idea would actually work.<p>

What he needed to do was spend some time meditating on the Force. He hadn't had the opportunity to do so since this strange episode in his life had begun. And he needed to, badly.

Perhaps PadmÃ© would forgive him if he let her sleep a while, he reasoned as he stepped away from her still, emaciated form, and quietly stepped out onto the veranda.

Aldera City was surrounded by nearby snow-peaked mountains, but the late afternoon was sunny and warm. There was a bite to the breeze coming down onto the palace, however, and he knew his meditation would have to be brief. Once night had fallen, the temperatures would most likely plummet, and staying outdoors too long would lead to complications.

Quickly, Obi-Wan sunk to his knees on the hard surface and focused his thoughts inward. One question immediately came to the forefront of his mind: How could he undo what he'd done? He didn't wish to lose her again, but he didn't want to watch her fade away, knowing he could do nothing to help her. It would be best to say what he needed to and let her go once and for all. But how?

He had gotten them in to this predicament by making his anguished plea to the Force. Could he simply take it back?

There was no way to know unless he tried, and so, he did. Thinking back just those few short days ago when he had felt the overwhelming pain of loss, he reached out to the Force and made his request. She deserved to be happy, but she also deserved peace and rest. Her spirit needed to be released into the afterlife.

He apologized for his selfish whim and made his appeal. Over and over he repeated the request, just in case he'd been misunderstood, and in order to declare his sincerity. If the Force had granted his first wish, surely it would listen to this one as well. Especially, since this one made much more sense.

The Force, however, had something else in mind. For when he rose from his knees to check on PadmÃ's status, not only did he not find her passed on, but she was on her feet, glaring at him.

"Why did you let me sleep so long?"

"I'm sorry," Obi-Wan apologized, noticing that indeed, the sun was beginning to sink behind the mountains and the sky was painted by its setting. "I guess I lost track of time while meditating."

"Well.." she chewed her lip, showing a rare hint of irritation, "I wish you would've woken me up earlier like you promised. I'll never be able to sleep tonight."

That wasn't going to be a problem for him. Exhaustion was seeping up from his feet and into his knees which were sore from kneeling for so long. But he wasn't about to tell her that.

"And what else is there to do?" she continued complaining, crossing her arms over her chest. "There's no entertainment of any kind, and no datapads. There's not even a comm system in here."

"If there were," Obi-Wan pointed out, "I wouldn't allow you access to it. You're supposed to be hiding, remember?"

"Which I'm getting pretty tired of!" she loudly declared, stepping up to the doors to look at the view, although it did little to calm her nerves. "We should be out there," she motioned into the sky, "not in here burrowing like a couple of field rodents! And speaking of rodents, someone needs to let Breha know about the stench! It smells like one died in here."

Obi-Wan's eyes widened with surprise. He'd actually begun to notice, but hadn't mentioned it. It was something he would get used to, he imagined.

"I'll speak to her about it," he replied, trying his best to ease her distress, although she was becoming increasingly restless. "In the meantime, you need to find something to occupy your time. Would you care for a game of.."

"Don't you dare say sabbac!" she growled, shoving her fingers into her hair and grabbing it by the fistful as Obi-Wan shuddered. There was a very good chance she was about to pull it all out by the roots, and he stepped forward to stop her, but she stepped away before he could, and began pacing the floor.

"I don't want to spend my time shut up in here playing cards while there is a murderer out there! I can't believe this! You know what? If I didn't care about you so much, I really wouldn't like you right about now."

It was obvious she was upset, but he couldn't keep the silly grin off his face. So, she had feelings for him after all. He had often wondered what would've happened if he had approached her back then, and told her how he felt about her. Would she have returned his affections and chosen him over his apprentice?

"And just what are you smiling at?"

"I'm deliriouslyâ€¦tired," he edited himself, disappointed with what a coward he was. "I need to get some rest and then we'll discuss this some more if you'd like."

"You're impossible, do you know that? And what am I supposed to do while you're sleeping?"

She was right in one aspect. There was very little to do, but he did have one suggestion.

"Perhaps relax with a long, hot soak in the tub? It may make you feel better."

"That's one idea," she replied, though not looking completely convinced.

"Or I could put you out for the night," Obi-Wan offered with a crooked smile.

"I'm not falling for that again," PadmÃ© declared. "The first time, you promised me just a short nap. Who knows? If I let you do that again to me for the night? I may not ever wake up!"

8. Chapter 8

****Dearly Departed: Chapter Eight****

* * *

><p>She was dying. Somehow, she knew it. She could feel it deep within, like she was losing her grip. Little by little, her strength was diminishing and she was sliding further and further down. It would do little good to ask Obi-Wan what was going on. He hadn't admitted anything so far, and had avoided answering most of her questions, which was rather confounding. He'd always been so forward and honest with her, but now; it seemed as if he was hiding something.<p>

Like the possibility that she had somehow contracted a fatal disease. It was the only explanation for her deteriorating looks, her loss of energy, her lack of appetite and inability to sleep. She wouldn't last long at this rate. Nobody would.

Maybe a few days; maybe a week, but it couldn't be longer than that. Each passing moment brought a new awareness of the growing hollowness inside, as if her body and her spirit were being separated and pulled

in different directions, leaving behind an empty shell.

A disease might also explain the gap in her memory. Or perhaps Corda wasn't the only one who had been injured during the attack on her ship. Following the assassin's attempt on her life, she recalled meeting Obi-Wan and Ani, and then going to bed. Everything after that was a blur.

If she were dying, she would actually prefer to be with her family; to spend her last moments surrounded by the people who loved her, not just the one man she was in love with.

Yes. It was true. She was in love with Obi-Wan Kenobi and had been for a while. In the beginning, she had dismissed it as a crush. Following his heroic efforts of battling and killing the Sith apprentice on Naboo, she had become quite enamored. The time they had spent talking before he left to return to Coruscant had only increased her favor of him.

However, the time they spent apart following the war in Theed had dampened it. Neither of them were at fault. They both had busy lives and many responsibilities. She had thought about him often, but honestly had very little hope they would have a future together.

Ten years later, however, fate intervened and the attack happened. The moment he stepped foot through her door and she saw his face again, she knew. This wasn't a simple crush. She was in love. Only, he wasn't aware of it, and she was too proud to tell him.

She should've told him.

What did it matter now? It was too late. She had run out of time and ironically, would be spending her last moments not only Obi-Wan, but with her regret.

He had fallen asleep a few minutes ago and Padma was sitting next to him one side of the wide bed. He had stripped down to his under-tunics and leggings, and as soon as his breathing had slowed and steadied, she took the opportunity to ghost her hand over his chest and up and over his face, her bold caress hovering as close to his skin as possible without actually touching him.

Unlike Obi-Wan, she was tired of keeping secrets, although not brave enough to say it where he could actually hear it. When the time was right, perhaps she would find the courage to say it when he was awake. For now, she would use this opportunity to practice putting her feelings into words.

"I'm uncertain if you've taken on this task voluntarily, but it's definitely above and beyond the call of duty. Don't misunderstand me. Even if you were assigned, I'm glad the Council chose you," she whispered into the growing darkness. "I'm in love with you, Obi-Wan. I hope I get the chance to tell you before I go."

Padma watched him closely, making sure he was sleeping soundly until she could no longer make out his features. An accumulation of clouds had erased all illumination in the night sky, making further observation impossible.

She could lie down next to him and wait for morning she supposed, but

restlessness quickly gnawed away her efforts, forcing PadmÃ© to rise from the bed.

She spent a good deal of time standing before the tall double doors, staring out onto the veranda and up into the falling snow, until discovering a gentle pulling sensation deep within herself. Something was drawing her outside. Whether it was her own will or the elusive Force which Obi-Wan relied upon, she wasn't sure, but she followed its call and stepped outside into the gathering storm.

* * *

><p>AN: Yes, this was short, but it's all about quality not quantity, people. ;)

End
file.